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Statement submitted by Islamic Research and Information Artistic and Cultural Institute, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Education is a powerful driver of development, which has influential impact on improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability. Primary education as a critical component of an educational system on elimination of poverty, which is mentioned as the first Millennium Development Goal is undeniable.

It is noteworthy to point that education of children is not limited to the information and facts they are expected to learn. The emotional, social and physical well-being of the students are mentioned as the key factors in primary education systems.

Although free primary school for all children is a fundamental right, unfortunately, there are still millions of children left to enrol in schooling worldwide.

Children of indigenous populations or ethnic minorities and also children with disabilities often face discrimination and are excluded from education.

These problems will impact on the progress made towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It seems that for solving these problems educational, religious and political leaders in all nations should take bold steps to provide all of their children free basic education. Although financing for the poorest countries, eliminating school fees, building schools in villages and creating education systems will be helpful too.

Islam as a divine religion also emphasized the influence of both education and poverty reduction in acquiring peace and happiness in life. This emphasis is to the extent that the Prophet of Islam says "Seeking of knowledge is a duty of every Muslim". He said that the scholars are the heirs of the Prophets and that the Prophets did not leave behind any money, rather their inheritance was knowledge.

In order to reduce poverty also, Islam came with the most just and easy solution through several methods such as The Obligatory Zakat, which is a certain "tax" on people's accumulated wealth to be distributed among the poor and optional charity in different situations. According to Islamic perspective, knowledge is a prerequisite for the creation of a just world. In the case of country's disorder or war the Quran emphasizes the importance of the pursuit of learning. No man becomes truly a Muslim without knowing the meaning of Islam, because he becomes a Muslim not through birth but through knowledge.

Acquiring knowledge is identified in Islam as worship. The practice of knowledge is connected with ethics and morality with promoting virtue and combating vice.

Hence we believe that the religious leaders have an important role to encourage the believers to eradicate the illiteracy and to encourage them to distribute their wealth among the poor people.